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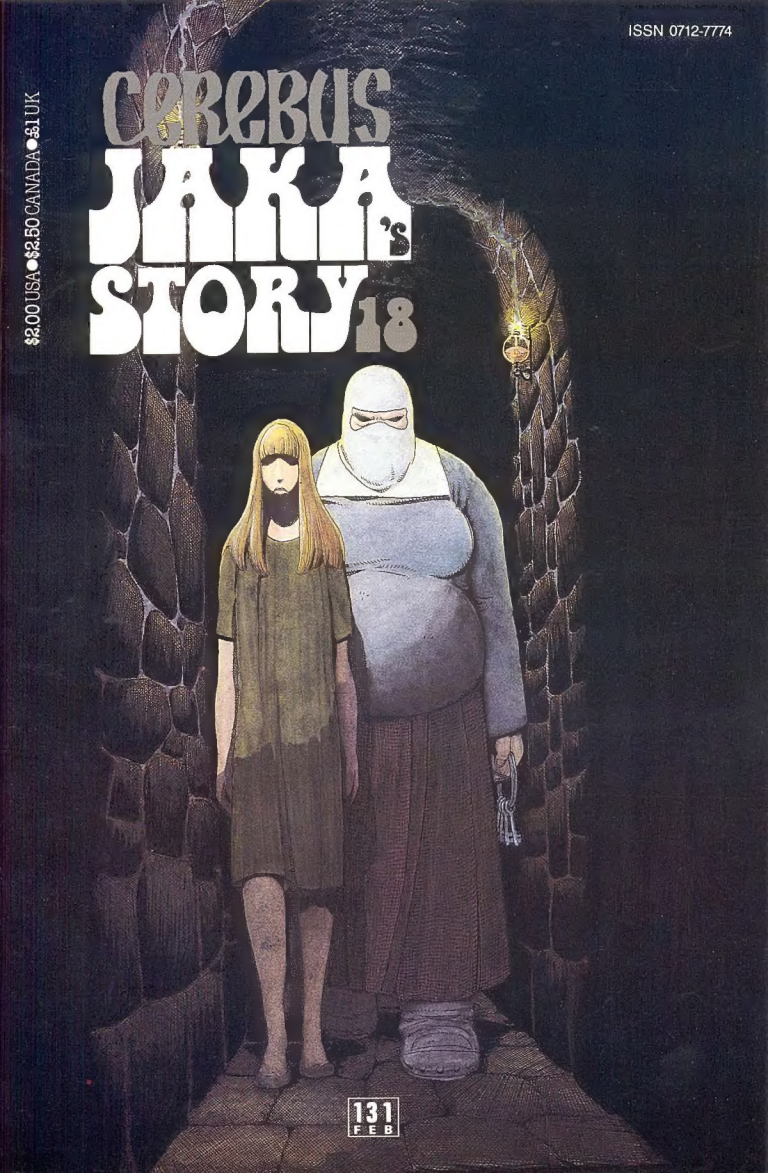
CEREBUS

JAKA'S STORY

18



131
FEB

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Excuse me while I wipe some of this black ink off of my fingers. I've been waiting for this issue for a while as a design exercise (not to mention the contrast between Mystery Achievement and The Poet). When it started becoming obvious that 131 was to be the first issue drawn in the Off-White House (there's even a little Camp David out back) I was getting pretty eager to get started. We moved all of the office stuff out of Room 602-603 at 47 King Street West last Monday while Ger finished issue 130. I got a slow start on 131 Tuesday and Wednesday while Ger packed up the studio in Room 302 at 47 King St. West. It's less than a week later and we've got the cover and most of the first eight pages done, so we're still on schedule for being caught up on our cover-dates by the end of Jaka's Story (we hope).

As for the actual content of Mystery Achievement, I'm pretty happy with it. I can't believe we're here already, though. In a way it feels like I did the Missy and Magic bits yesterday and in a way I feel like I've spent most of my life drawing Oscar Wilde.

I'm really just rambling here because I got a note from Bob 'Boze' Bell today saying that he always reads this stuff and he's always disappointed when I leave it blank so there went my idea of just printing a photo of the old office building in here. Bob sent along an ad for his graphic novel 'The Man Canyon' that's really, really funny and we'll be running it next issue. It features Bob's brilliant creation "Honkeytonk Sue".

Let's see; I've got the text piece done for this issue and the final (I hope) corrections for the letters page. And now I've got this Note done. I promise to try to have something a little more interesting to say next time.

Oh right! Something I've been meaning to mention. A lot of people have been asking what Gerhard does on the book since he was nominated for "best inker" in the Harvey awards last year. Gerhard does all of the backgrounds in pencil and ink on the covers and interior pages. I write the words, letter the balloons (pencil and ink) and pencil and ink all of the characters and all of the characters' clothing. Gerhard puts the mechanical tones on the backgrounds where he sees fit and puts the tones on Cerebus (and the costumes if I indicate it, except for Jaka's skirt on page 12-13 in this issue. I put the tone on that. I don't know why. Just felt like it, I guess).

So, yes Gerhard inks his backgrounds, but he also pencils them and I'd say he's at least as good a background pencil artist as he is a background ink artist but I never vote in the awards so what do I know, right? If I have a specific background or angle in mind, I'll suggest it to him or do a rough sketch on the page. It's up to him if he wants to follow it or do something else. As we pointed out at the Northampton Summit if Gerhard wants to draw the interior of a submarine instead of Pud's tavern, that's up to Gerhard; that's what creative freedom is about. He draws Pud's tavern because he wants the story to work the same as I do. If I ask for advice on what I'm doing he gives it and I take it or leave it. If he asks for advice I give it and he takes it or leaves it. Creative Freedom. Rah rah.

Well, there you go, B.B.B. I promise I'll never leave this space blank again if'n I can help it.

Oh, and Gerhard colours the covers, too with Dr. Martin dyes.

I'm done now, so I'll shut up.

See you next issue.

★★★★★★★★★★

The Oscar character wishes to apologize for the incorrect usage of the word 'irregardless' in issue 128 and hastens to point out that the composition of the text pieces in Jaka's Story consists in the perfect use of an imperfect comic book writer (who shall remain nameless).

CEREBUS

NO. 131 FEBRUARY 1990

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

MONIQUE KAPTEIN
Administrative Assistant

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

• •

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to
Cerebus 119)

•

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to
Cerebus 130)

•

MYSTERY ACHIEVEMENT
(Cerebus 131 to
Cerebus 136)

•

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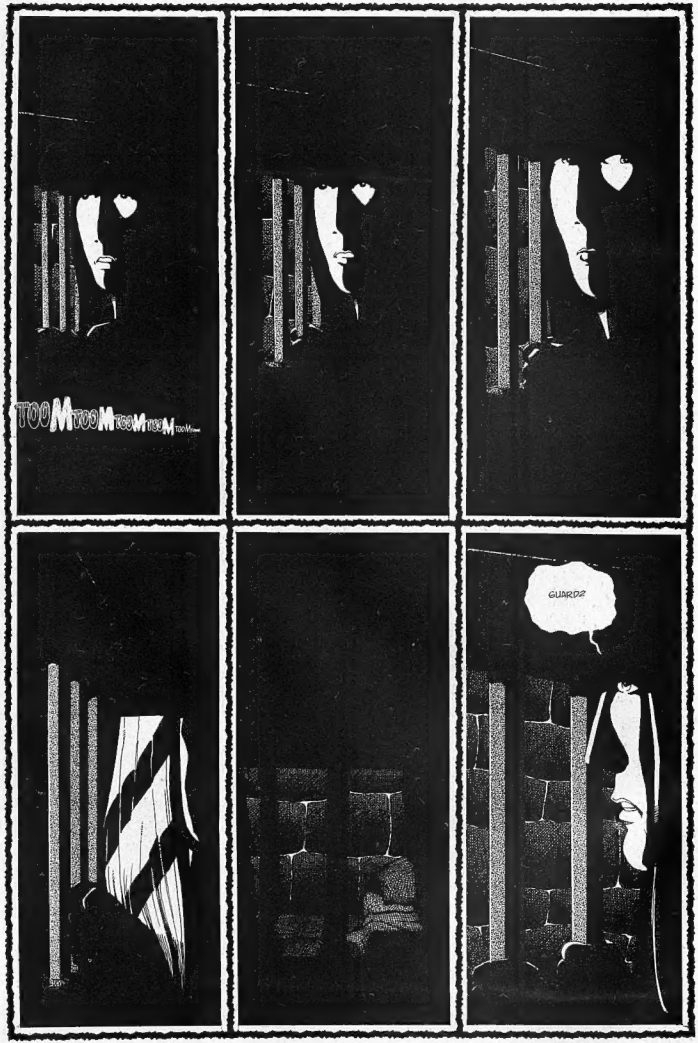
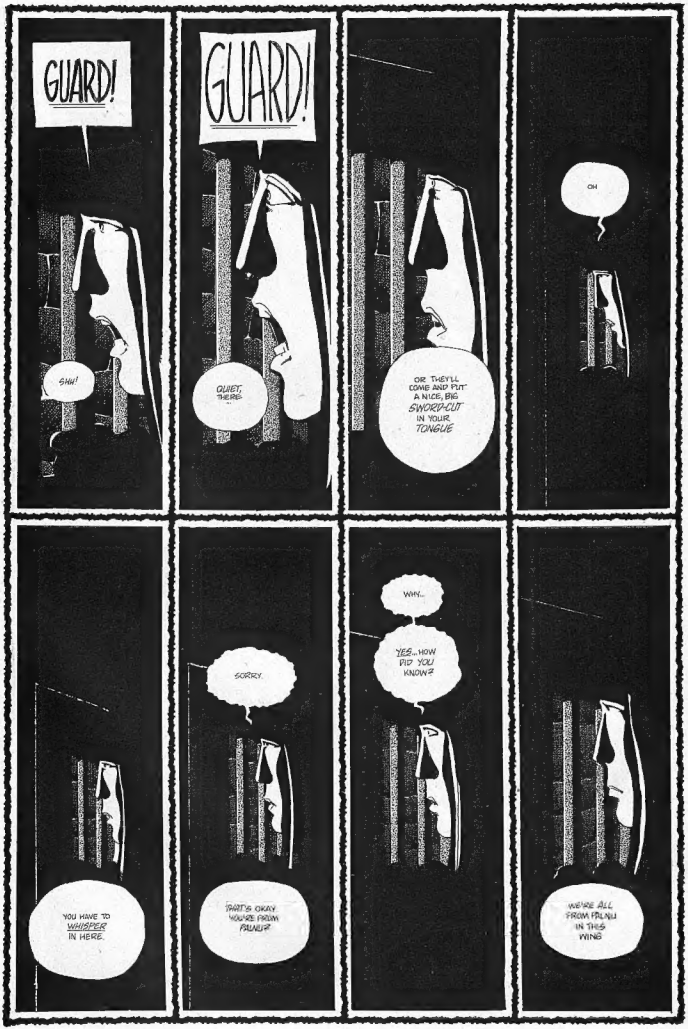
PRINTED IN CANADA

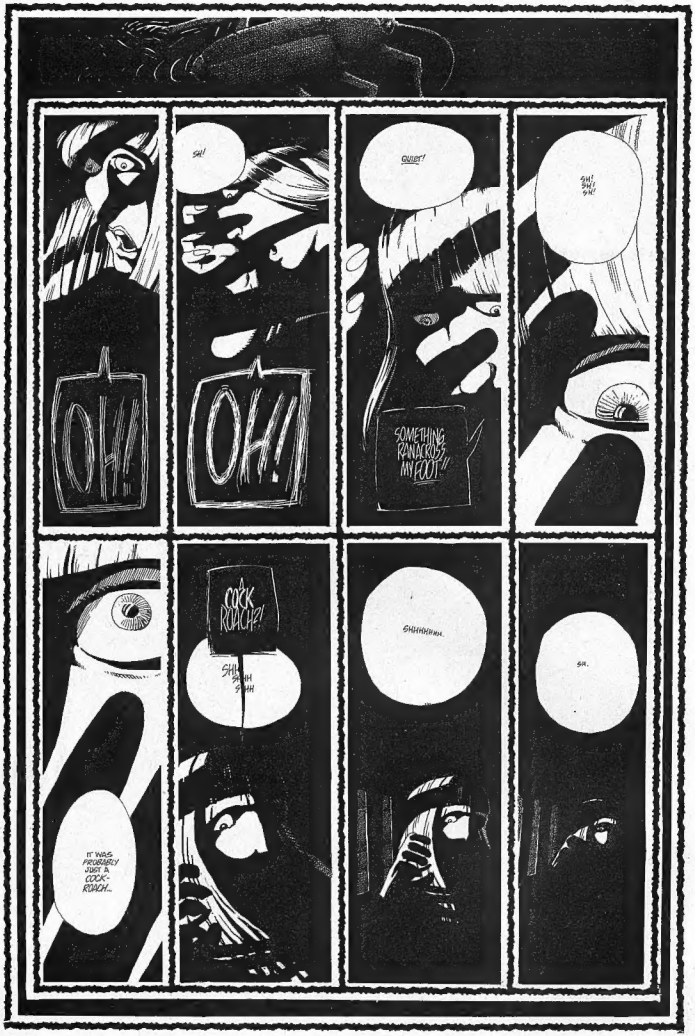
book three
MYSTERY ACHIEVEMENT

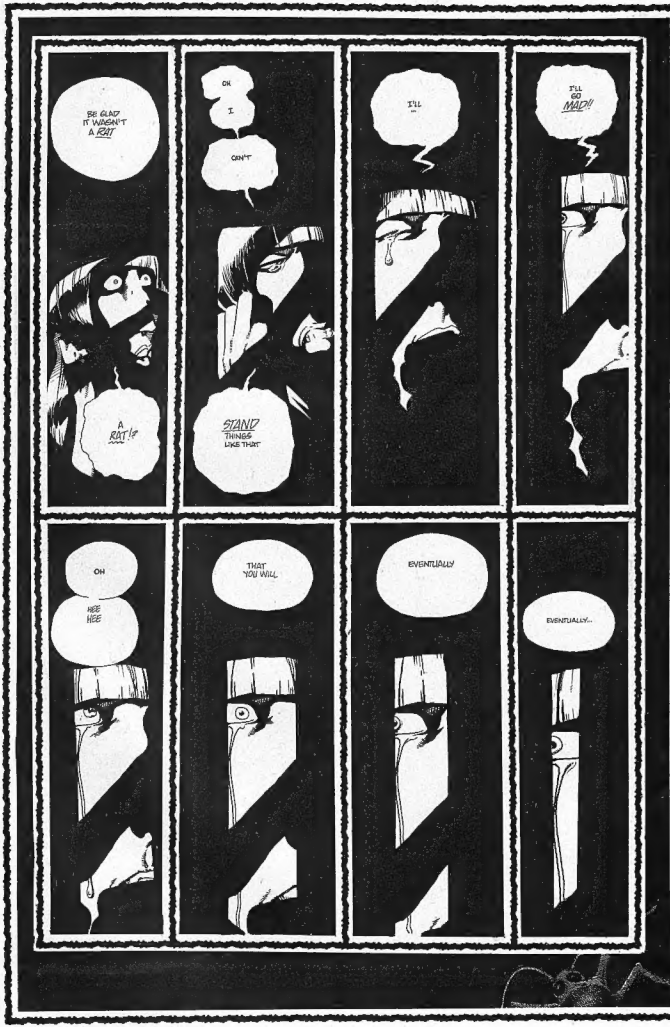
CHING
CLIK
KLAK
TING
WAIT!
EH...
WHAT ARE THESE BUCKETS FOR...?
ONE'S FOR YOUR FOOD.

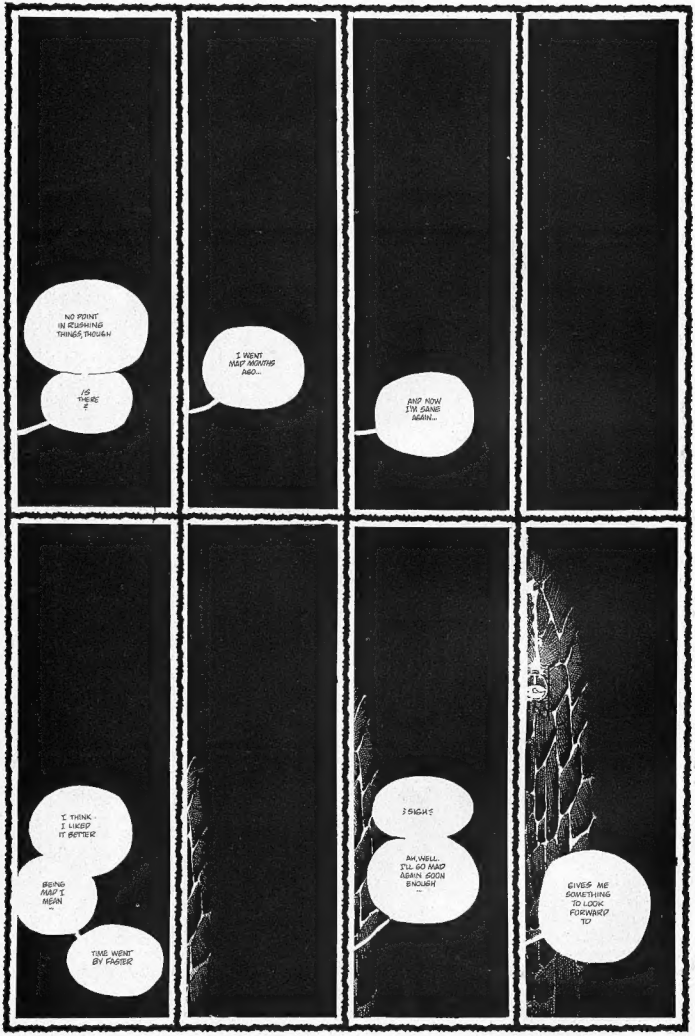
CRANG
OTHER ONE'S FOR YOUR EYE, DOPE
THUD
OH
DEAR
WHICH IS
WHICH IS WHICH?
THAT'S UP TO YOU.
TOOMTOOMTOOM, TOOMTOOMTOOM


TOO M
GUARD?


GUARD!
SHH!
GUARD!
QUIET, THERE.
OR THEY'LL COME AND PUT A NICE, BIG SWORD-CUT IN YOUR TONGUE
OH
YOU HAVE TO WHISPER IN HERE.
SORRY.
THAT'S OKAY. YOU'RE FROM FALNU?
WHA...
YES... HOW DID YOU KNOW?
WE'RE ALL FROM FALNU IN THIS WING


OH!
SH!
OH!
QUIET!
SOMETHING RANACEOUS IN MY POT!!
SH! SH! SH!
IT WAS PROBABLY JUST A COCK-ROACH...
COCK ROACH!
SHHHHHHHH.
SH.


I'LL GO MAD!!
I'LL ..
OH I CAN'T
STAND THINGS LIKE THAT
BE GLAD IT WASN'T A RAT
A RAT!?
EVENTUALLY...
EVENTUALLY
THAT YOU WILL
OH HEE HEE


NO POINT IN RUSHING THINGS, THOUGH
/S THERE
?
I WENT MAD MONTHS AGO...
AND NOW I'M SANE AGAIN...
I THINK I LIKED IT BETTER
BEING MAD'S MEAN ~
TIME WENT BY FASTER
SIGH
AH, WELL. I'LL GO MAD AGAIN SOON ENOUGH ~
GIVES ME SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO

HOW... LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN HERE?
EIGHT MONTHS
NINE MONTHS
I LOST TRACK
EIGHT MONTHS OR I COUNT-
SIX!
POSSIBLY
LISTEN...

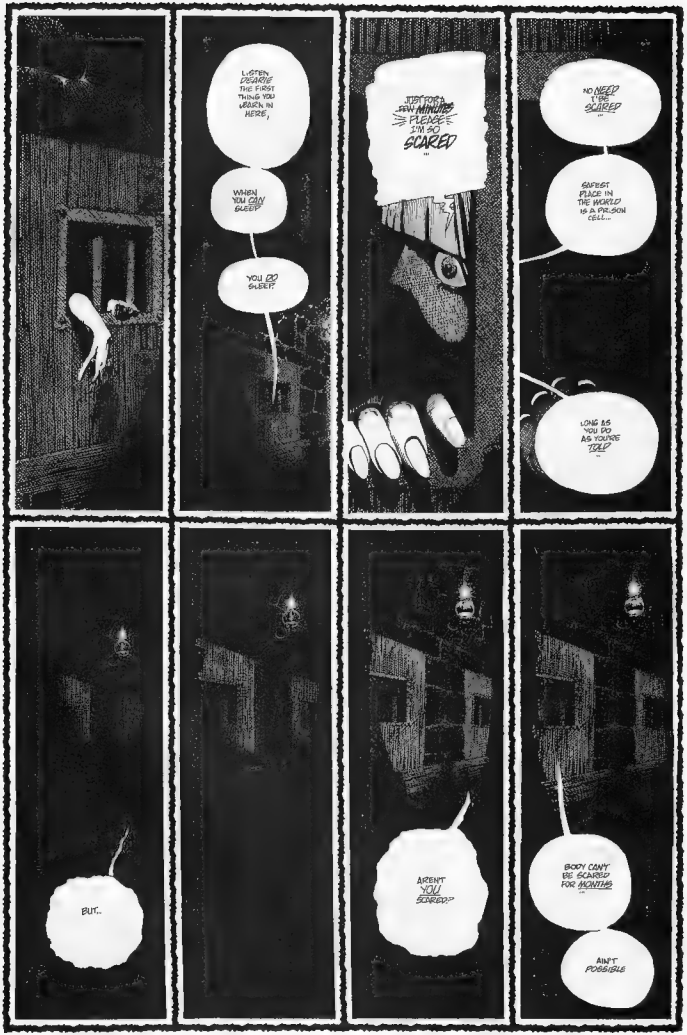
TOOM TOOM TOOM TOOM
TOOM TOOM TOOM TOOM TOOM TOOM TOOM TOOM

TOOM TOOM TOOM TOOM TOOM
OKAY...
WE CAN TALK AGAIN

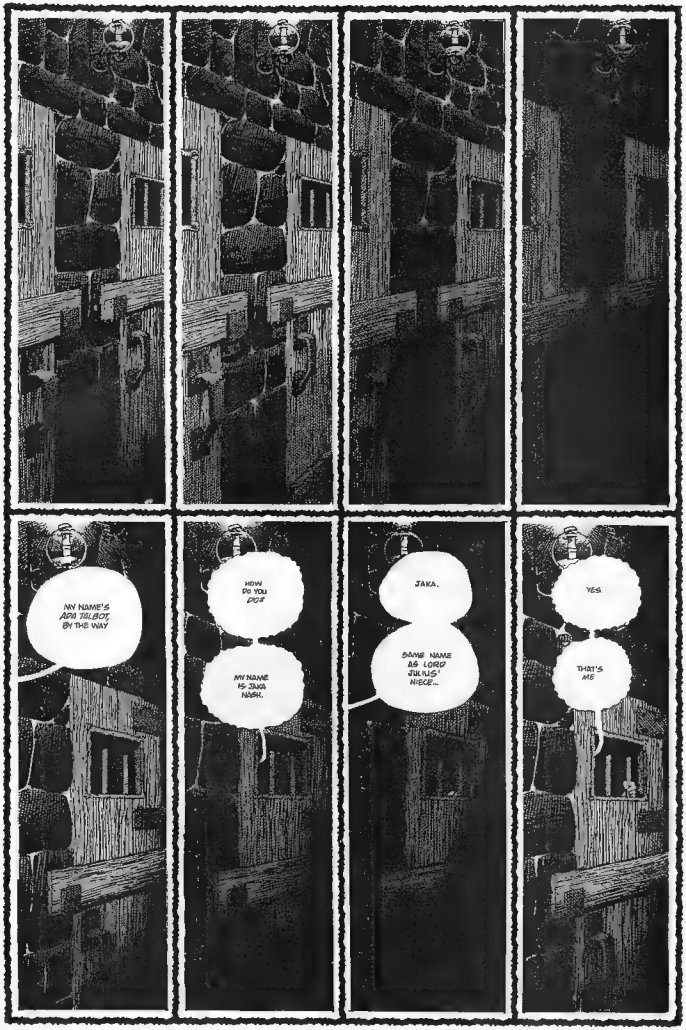
SHE
SHE WASN'T SERIOUS, WAS SHE? ABOUT THE
THE BUCKET
HOW D'YE MEAN?
AS A...
A TOILET.
'FIZJO SO
I'M OKY THAT WAY ARE YOU?
WELL I MEAN
A BUCKET
DON'T WORRY YOU'LL BE USING IT SOON ENOUGH
I WILL?
OH SURE FOOD IN HERE GIVES YOU DIARRHOEA RIGHT AWAY!
CAFE

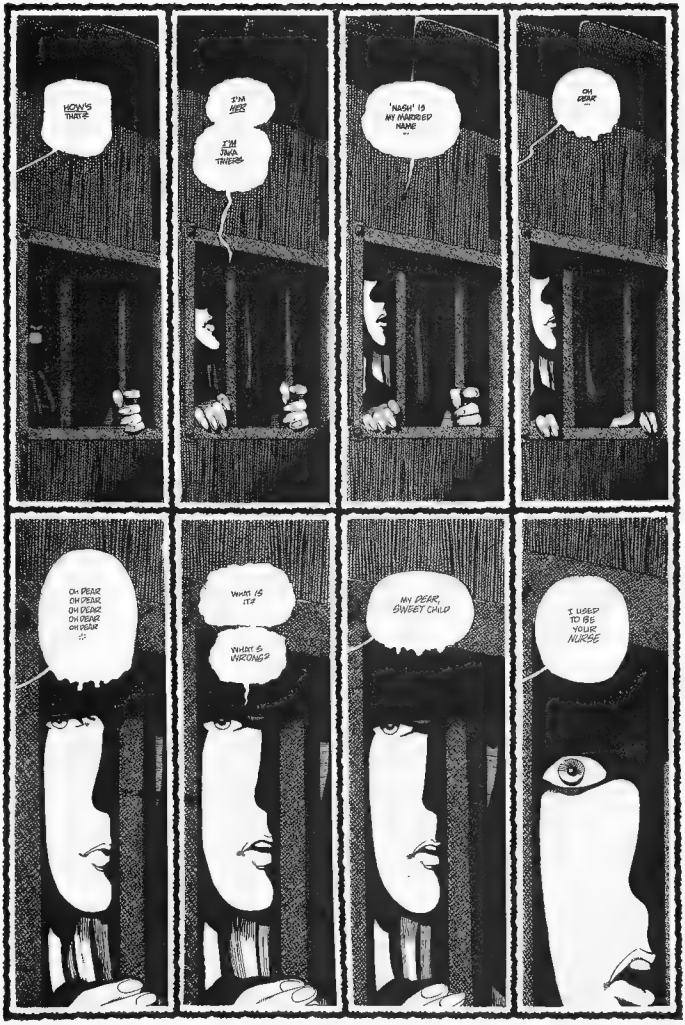
WELL..
I'M GOING TO GET SOME SLEEP NOW
NICE TALKING WITH YOU --

NO!!!
NO PLEASE!!
I HAVE TO KEEP TALKING TO SOMEONE!!
I
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP


LISTEN DEARIE THE FIRST THING YOU LEARN IN HERE,
WHEN YOU CAN SLEEP!
YOU DO SLEEP.
JUST FOR A FEW MINUTES PLEASE! I'M SO SCARED
NO NEED TO BE SCARED
SAFEST PLACE IN THE WORLD IS A PRISON CELL...
LONG AS YOU DO AS YOU'RE TOLD
BUT..
AREN'T YOU SCARED?
BODY CAN'T BE SCARED FOR MONTHS
AIN'T POSSIBLE

BOREDOM
ON THE
OTHER
HAND...
THAT'S
WHAT MAKES
YOU CRAZY
NOT THE
FILTH OR THE
RATS OR
THE FOOD
BOREDOM
PURE AND
SIMPLE.


MY NAME'S ADA TALBOT, BY THE WAY
HOW DO YOU DO?
MY NAME IS JAKA NASH.
JAKA.
SAME NAME AS LORD JULIUS' NIECE...
YES.
THAT'S ME


HOW'S THAT?
I'M HERE
I'M AWA TAWERS
'NASH' IS MY MARRIED NAME
OH DEAR
I USED TO BE YOUR NURSE
MY DEAR, SWEET CHILD
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT'S WRONG?
OH DEAR OH DEAR OH DEAR OH DEAR OH DEAR

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave Sim,
Some things give you a really satisfying sense of fulfillment don't they? So much so, that if they're not actually there they certainly should be and therefore in accordance with the universal laws of Wish Fulfillment (you know, the ones that only exist if you want them to), as far as you're concerned they *are* (incidentally, quite a good short-term way for dealing with ex-lovers). Right, I'm not just talking crap. Although that's part of it. There is a point to the above, and the point is this:
Understandably, some people (ie. the bastard I was arguing with last night, you know who you are) say that Jaka, Cerebus and company aren't real. Let's face it, we say they're not real. But we know they are, really. After all, how could a creature as flawless and elegant as Jaka possibly not exist?
There. Consider yourself to be bloody stupid, Mr. Bastard From Last Night. The whole of Cerebusdom has risen up in anger against you, but don't you come running into my arms begging for mercy . . . (only joking mate, friends really).
Incidentally Mitchell Laughlin (126) is right. You want the bastards buying Avengers etc. to step onto the next rung of the evolutionary ladder by getting Cerebus, but you'd never want to sully a copy by pressing it into their hands: No, they don't deserve it. They've got to make the move all on their own but they can't, because they haven't the wit – it's a case of Catch 22, isn't it?

By the way, any Cerebus fan anywhere needs a place to stay, I don't mind.
Brixton's a nice place.
Maggie K.
Address omitted because of
concern for her safety.
London Sw2 2BH
England
P.S. Have a very special New Year's Eve – the start of a new decade, so make it count for something.
Last footnote – Hello Lenny Henry! weren't expecting that, were you?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,
Whoo! Like a bull moose on acid, whirling and spiraling down the abyss of post-ancient Pagan ritual calamity, shuffling that weird, weird deck of cards and landing in the lap of Andre Gide! That's what it's been like lately, New Year's in Vail with a half million of my crazed and druken best friends, acting like Hunter Thompson by accident and stealing cops' billy clubs and drinking champagne and ignoring college application deadlines and playing Sonic Youth and the Clash at volumes previously unheard of at Barry Craddock's however-many-million-dollar house on the side of the ski slope! Never before has there been such an irresponsible brawl, a brash refusal to not behave like the idiot teenagers I hate so much, unless you count last New Year's! Too many exclamation points! Grammar lessons in the nude! Letters from Dave Sim!
Yes thank you for the letter, man; it brightened my day and eliminated those embarrassing spots on my glasses that my ordinary detergent leaves behind. As for Christy/Maria – as if I would indulge in such a cheap fanboy ploy as to start talking about chicks who don't like me and how bummed out I am or chicks who do like me and how I'm not bummed out or my girlfriend this or my girlfriend that or whatever. I don't participate in my psych class discussions either, if they're all pseudointellectual and utilise such words as "metaphysical" and draw analogies involving cats and cement. There was some stupid guy in the dreaded comic store I shop at who had like nine Marvel Comics patches on his backpack, and as I was buying Daniel Clowes's Eightball the guy is grabbing X-Men and Wolverine and other lame shit and saying, "Man, they're all in today! I'll pick one and then another one'll be there and it's like, hey, I didn't expect to see you here!" or something and I felt the same way I usually do in these situations which is the same way I feel during pseudo-intellectual discussions in psych.
The only reason I call the comic shop I shop at "dreaded" is its clientele. Is there anybody else in my city who reads good comics!? If so, call me or something, shit!
Why isn't "sniggly" a word?
I'm sorry for the pencilly finger print smudges; I just got done drawing Panamanians. You know how that can be.
So is Floppy going to be tried for homosexuality and spend his last years in prison, a broken man, alone in despair? And how does "Fred" fit into all this? Just how will that funky thing that Floppy was painting affect the plot? Will Robert still marry Dinah even though she used to be a man and may be carrying Stu's child while Stu may have the AIDS virus? Is your favourite thing about my letters how I sometimes block out entire sentences with my "x" key rather than using the correction ribbon. What's your favourite Bullwinkle episode?
My favourite part in Woody Allen's Sleeper is when he and Diane find that Volkswagen from 200 years ago and it has that bumper sticker and he says, "The owner was probably a member of the N.R.A., which was an organisation that used to help criminals obtain firearms so they could shoot citizens," or something equally cool which I'm not obsessively fanboyish enough to go rent a copy and quote exactly, or however that sentence would properly be structured. I also think that CSNY song "Almost Cut My Hair" is stupid because who gives a shit if any of them got their hair cut or not. What? Was it supposed to be some hippie badge of freedom? Oh, excuse me, I thought it was just long hair you stupid fad-following poseur. Ooo, ridiculous stupid punk skater type term. Whom else can we rag on, I wonder? Anyway Zappa said it best.
Has anyone else ever noticed the similarities between the names Frank Zappa and Franz Kafka? Has anyone ever read "In the Penal Colony"? Or listened to "We're Only in it for the Money?"
All right, I've got to hide in the barn and burn a flag, being sure to cover my tracks. Then I'll go dodge semi-automatic weapons fire or something. Propaganda in the '70's was that "If you're Happy and You Know it Clap Your Hands" song.
Michael Robbins
3590 Clubheights Dr.
Colorado Springs, CO
80906
P.S. The '80's won't be over for a long time, man.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,
I was sitting in my spiffy new apartment listening to Fugazi and the MC5, and reading Bukowski, H.S. Th-

ompson, and of course, the new Cerebus, when I saw that you're planning to personally respond to all of your mail for the next few weeks. DUDE!!! A personal letter from God! WoW! I don't know if I'll make your deadline, but what the hell; nobody is back for the spring semester yet anyway, and I really don't have shit to do.
So what do you think is wrong with all of these freaks treating you like a deity anyway. Hell, I haven't believed in any sort of god since the days when Robert Anton Wilson made me a pope.
I mean, I really like your work and your attitude (as revealed in your opening notes and responses to mail), but I'd be hard pressed to decide if I like you more than R. Crumb or Alan Moore (and you damn well better be flattered by the company I've placed you in).
Anyway, I've been reading Cerebus for about five years now, ever since the owner of my local comic shop (now defunct) lent me his own collection (eat your hearts out, folks). I've accumulated most of the early stuff through reprints since then, though I've still got a few holes here and there, primarily due to the lack of decent comic shops nearby and my reluctance to blow $35 on a reprint volume containing a mere four or five issues that I need.
I've been wondering lately exactly what the purpose of your letter column is. Is it just a forum for people who want to make witty ocmments and get the subsequent kick out of seeing their name in print? The letters you've been printing seem to have less and less to do with the comic, and more to do with people's shattered love lives (what is this – communal self pity?), and such non-issues as the merit of masturbation over actual intercourse (Come on people, which do you really prefer? why do you beat off in the first place?). As for the REM question: the environment is the hip issue; REM, the hip band.
What do you expect?
If I ever have a son, I'll name him Xerxes. Other good names: Agamemnon, Achilles, Oedipus (what would that do to the kid?).
Well, I guess I've said enough, since I need to get on to writing letters to people who I know will write back. I won't make any foolish coments about being with you until issue 300 – your livelihood isn't my responsibility –, but I'll keep reading as long as you maintain your standards.
Take care.
John Wells
Seminole Plaza Apartments #5
736 W. Virginia St.
Tallahassee, FL
32304
P.S. down with the Seminoles.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,
It's a boring Sunday and I'm working in the only comic store in the appendix of the United States. Listening to Elvis Costello and having just finished reading the new Spirit comic and Cerebus #127, I decided to write a letter – after I answer the phone. Probably some twerp wanting to know how long Spidey will stay "cosmic", or how much The Huntress #2 is. Oh boy! It's a wrong number. Although I wouldn't mind working at Margie's Fabric World.
Anyway, back to my literary piece of magic. Now I know that you've received tons of praise on your work with Cerebus. Well, I'd like to add a few more pounds to the pile.
The first Cerebus I read was in July of '87. I was waiting in the heat to see The Moody Blues. A friend handed me a volume of the Swords of Cerebus to look at to kill the time. I flipped through the pages and then used it for a fan.
Since then I've read a lot of ,comics. Cerebus was not one of them. Although Dave Sim was one of my favourite "comics personalities". Working in a comic store has made me very familiar with the distributing and business end of stick, (Well more familiar than most people). I had a tremendous respect for what you were doing to the comic industry. Kicking ass and taking names. And every time I heard your name mentioned, the words "asshole" soon followed.
So I decided last year to finally read Cerebus with the beginning of "Jaka's Story".
Impressive. Better than impressive. I see so much hard and dedicated work in this book it astounds me. Nothing on the stands today breathes the same intensity as your book. The story is truly wonderful. The art is fantastic. The paneling, the flow and story-telling, the ultimate feeling in this book is tremendous. Good work.
Well enough praise. I don't want to sound like a brownnoser.
Again, thanks for Cerebus.
Sincerely yours,
The Atomic Punk
506 Congress
Denton, TX
76201
P.S. Since you rejected my "single page" submission how about sending me one of those nifty "reindeer shit" Christmas cards?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,
I always read Jaka's Story on the bus on my way home. (At 30 minutes, it gives me just enough time to finish the letters page too.) I believe the atmospheres of the bus and the book are similar: cramped, isolated (even when other people are there), no real way out until you're at your destination, stuffy. You know. Anyway, it puts me in a position where I can almost feel the air of the Inn.
In other words, I enjoy it.
Issue 127. Nice to see Fred again. Even if it looks like he's thinking about leaving soon.
You kept me on the edge of my seat (a dangerous thing on the bus, as the seats are curved, and I could easily have fallen in the muck on the floor) with Pud and Jaka. Punch after Punch. Ow. My jaw feels sore and probably still will when you read this (but no longer if it's printed and everbody else sees it). Wow. Now that's suspense.
Fascinating detail on Pud's shirt. I wonder if it's your work (being on a character) or Gerhard's. His backgrounds are still among the very best, by the way.
Good, Dave good. Can't wait for High Society. So I'm a newcomer.
Niall MacConaill
2 Des Érables
Hull, Quebec
J8Y 6K8

★★★★★★★★★★

Mr. Sim:
Obscenity is the milk of creation. Did Oscar say that? I don't know but I think he would have. I've been thinking about starting my own religion based on the works of William S. Burroughs, but I can't decide if I should wait til the bastard dies. Does Dave Sim ever want to join the circus? Oh yes, before I ask you for a donation for my used-condom collection, some advice: wear black, be sure your shoes are made of leather, live the life/kill the wife.
P.S. Tell Cassandra that her Richard Kern / Sonic Youth / Butthole Surfers tape is on the way. I wanted to include a video that has all these Scottish girls having sex with animals.
BLUTO
1826 Bay St.
Alameda, CA
94501
Uncle Sam's Asshole

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Cerebus folk,
Just wanted to write to get some stuff off my chest. It was either you or my congressman, and I really don't think my congressman gives a fuck about what I think anyway, so here goes.
First of all, I'm so glad America and its people are so much superior to all other peoples and their governments, otherwise we wouldn't be able to get away with half the international bullshit that we get away with. Invade

Panama? Sounds okey dokey with me. We'll save those Americans down there, no matter how many Panamanians we have to kill to do it. I wouldn't want to call ol' President George any indecent names or anything, but if I did, let's just say that one would start with "d' and rhyme with "dickhead". Secondly is it just me, or is America one of the most sexually repressed and uptight countries in the history of the universe? It's no wonder that preachers are molesting their altar boys and that parents do the same to their OWN DAMN KIDS. Just the other day, some lady dragged her 16 year old boy out of an R-rated movie just because of a little T&A. Sex is a natural function, and the human body is nothing to be ashamed of. And no, I don't walk down the street with my wanker hangin' out of my pants, but I don't see why anyone should care if I did.

Thirdly, why is everyone so uptight about drugs? Sure. I smoke pot once in a while. I also still get A's in my fuckin' Physics classes, and no, I don't think that people should be stoned or high or amped 24 hours a day. Most think that it's OK to get drunk once in a while, but folks, being drunk or high are not a whole hell of a lot different. What people do to their own bodies should be their own damn business. And then there are these girls who like to get on guys' shoulders at concerts. I was at a Chili Peppers concert the other day, and some bitch kept on whining how she couldn't see the show and could she please sit on my shoulders. If you can't see, that's too damn bad. Go sit in the seats and get off the floor

Lastly, if anyone wants to check out some new music, you should try the Pogues, Jane's Addiction, or, for the harder crowd, Voivod (a Canadian band, by the way).

Thanks for listening. I feel much better.

Take it easy,
Cody Sandifer
34 Klondike Ct.
Chico, CA
USA 95926

P.S. I tried to get this letter in by the two-week reply deadline, but Northern California lags when it comes to getting comics on time. Oh, and Cerebus is pretty cool.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

If you ever, ever, ever make a "Cerebus the Aardvark" film, please use animation instead of live action background like "Roger Rabbit." This occured to me when I was watching a rerun of Alf and it nearly sent me into convulsions.

Hollywood sounds like a cruel and unusual place.

Sincerely,
Richard Haussman
Fort Collins, CO

P.S. It's good to see Lord Julius again.

P.S.S. Remember what they did to the duck.

★★★★★★★★★★

Sir,

Some thoughts, both irrelevant and inappropriate:

Each yuletide we are bombarded with the mythic tale of the two opposing armies in the trenches during the First World War. During a lull in the battle soldiers from both sides call a truce, climb from their foxholes, shake hands, make toasts to peace, drink, laugh, play football, exchange photographs of loved ones, sing carols, say farewell, and then return to their dugouts. A heartwarming story. But what happens next? the soldiers, who moments before had been laughing and joking with one another, now raise their rifles and commence firing once more only the circumstances have now subtly changed for they are no longer attempting to kill an unknown or "abstract" enemy but human beings who have drank with them, cheered with them, laughed with them, played football with them, and sang with them. The logical inference from all this is quite obvious: the men who stayed in the trenches and refused to make merry continued to kill the "abstract" enemy, total strangers, and thus remained (to a certain extent) decent, compassionate human beings in an insane, inhuman and brutal situation, whilst the men who had joined in with the celebrations now opened fire on an enemy they knew, on men they had communicated with, men who had wives, sweethearts and children just like themselves, men who were, perhaps, their friends, and thus they themselves were now monsters without either the aforementioned decency or compassion, trapped in a world (as Nietzsche had prophesised) enslaved by no moral values whatsoever.

In 1863 Abraham Lincoln made the memorable Gettysburg Address. One year later (the year he was reelected) a company of Union soldiers marched into an Indian settlement at Sand Creek and proceeded to massacre the old men, women and children there present; those who were simply murdered were few. So much for national monuments. (It is interesting to note that this selfsame incident reoccured over a hundred years later in another country and against another non-white peoples. History, it seems, does repeat itself; it would also be informative to add to this Malcolm X's comment that the only people in the world to have had the atom bomb dropped on them were non-white.)

Ceausescu was democratically tried and democratically executed within the same day (within the same hour?).

_ "No, no!" said the Queen. "Sentence first –verdict afterwards."

Oscar Wilde has written. "Experience is the name we give to our mistakes." this is undoubtedly true, but perhaps a more apposite epigram would be,"Love is the name we give to our mistakes." and I think the divine Oscar realised this more than anyone.

The enraged and apoplectic father who wrote to your column a few issues ago (he was the one who spelt "Illicit" incorrectly, if you remember) must have delighted you enormously for as the reknowned critic and author James Agee has noted "A good artist is a deadly enemy of Society."

Yours Insincerely,
Hazel Motes
3 Medlar St, Camberwell
London, SE5 0JU

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Thought I'd take a moment or two out of continent-trotting to make an uncharacteristically relevant comment, namely that I found the scenes betwixt Jaka and Pud in #127 to be genuinely moving. Cerebus is the only book I'm buying regularly on my wanderjahr, excepting, of course, the Silverbuck mini-series which I get because my little buddy Ronny Turner did the covers, and I take much delight in asking the geeky little kids behind the counters at comic shops if they don't think the covers are ugly. I know you'd have more trouble going unrecognized in a comic ship than I do, but, really, you should try this – it's so amusing to watch them fumble for an answer that won't get them in trouble with anyone. It's a little like asking an MP how he feels about abortion on election day. The desert is drying out my hair and skin, but I have a cooler hat and coat than anyone else here.

All best,
Derek McCulloch
Between Wives
Las Vegas

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Decency is not one of the prime requisites of an Elmhurst College security officer; well-acquainted with this

truism, I was more annoyed than surprised when the Kollege Kampus Kops announced their 6 A.M. arrival at my dorm room by sledghammering through my barricaded door.

"Who is it?" I stalled, leaping into my clothes.

"Security," grunted a voice between splintering blows. "We're evicting you. You graduated two months ago."

"Just a sec," I sang, gathering up the last of my possessions into a duffle bag. I had been expecting this, and had therefore sold whatever I owned that couldn't be stuffed into my beater, a 1980 Spirit.

Perched on the window sill, I withdrew from my bag a small, black, rubbery ball given to me by a friend majoring in chemistry. I lit the fuse, tossed the ball towards the door, and climbed down the knotted rope. As my feet hit the ground, I looked up and laughed as I saw taupe smoke billowing from the window, mingled with the delicious sounds of choking and swearing.

But the high, like all highs, soon ended. Behind the wheel of the Evil Spirit, it began to sink in: I had no job, no family, and now nowhere to live. A thorough scrounge under the car seats informed me that my life's savings amounted to an even two dollars in change.

I stared long and hard at the dusty coins in my hands, counting and recounting, trying to understand how I ever ended up like this.

After a good cry, I drove to the comic shop and bought the latest Aardvark. That was two years ago. Its one of my clearest memories of the 80's. Thanks, Dave, for everything.

Jim McCrackan
184 S. Rose St.
Bensenville, IL
USA 60106

P.S. I think Duglas Kilbride and I are psychically attuned to some kinda funky cosmic vibes, like in Close Encounters; I too have been noticing that it's twenty-three minutes past the hour – at least five times daily for the past six years.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I couldn't believe it — I'm at the mall, which is about the only exciting place to be in South Bend if you don't have an ID, and Waldenbooks was having a sale of a bunch of overstocked books. So I was able to get the trade paperback edition of Richard Ellman's biography of Wilde, which was coverpriced at $11.95, for a measly two and a half bucks. Haven't had a chance to read it yet, due to an abundance of readings my professors find it necessary to give me, but once spring break rolls around in March, I'm going to start.

The real reason I'm writing is to thank you for the indirect involvement you had in introducing me to Winona Kress. You remember, the smartfood girl from last summer? I gave her a call after reading the letter, we exchanged letters throughout the fall, and I went to Connecticut for her birthday party in January. (Despite the address on my letter, this wasn't an overly great travel — I was in Rhode Island when I first called her, and usually live in Massachusetts between sememsters.) WInona is beyond a doubt one of the most interesting people that I've met through comics — and we are talking about a motley bunch. The stories she told me about life in Enfield were just amazing, stuff that even I wouldn't have dreamed of doing. And to top it all off, she's a genuinely friendly sort of person, a rare pleasure to meet. (By the way, Winona, I know you're reading this — HI!)

And I owe it all to you, Dave.

Thank you.

Ron Hogan
105 Holy Cross Hall
Univ. of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IN
USA 46556

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Okay, check this one out. She says to me, "Just stay out of my way."

Hah, can you fucking believe that?

"Just stay out of my way."

I almost feel proud of that one.

Aaron Nodge
Providence, RI
USA

P.S. Okay, same girl, now. Just saw her again on the street. Turns out she has a crush (she's bisexual, of course) on the same teacher I have a crush on. Weird shit, huh? Dave, what course of action should I take?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I stopped reading *Cerebus* a few issues after *Jaka's Story* began. The short length of the installments, and the wait between them, disrupted the story too much for me to fully enjoy it. I have bought recent issues but bagged them unread while I eagerly anticipated the month when you would announce that a 10" X 7.5" "telephone book-sized" edition of the novel was available. Then I read the "Note From The President" detailing your revised publication plans.

Dave, despite my great love of your work and my great admiration for your financial and artistic struggle for independence, I simply cannot afford a $150 set of books without making a great deal of sacrifices.

I won't bore you with a financial sob story or insult you with fanboy demands. I just want to ask a question.

Will you *ever* publish *Jaka's Story* in a $25-30 "telephone book-sized" edition?

Respectfully,

Mark Daly
Box 390
Hampshire College
Amherst, MA
USA 01002

"Jaka's Story" in the direct mail "telephone book" (as opposed to Graphic Novels which are tiny) format will be available this November in a $25 edition.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Boys,

I am one of your Scottish readers and I'm lying here in my bed being very ill with flu listening to one of my 'Faith No More' albums. I've been reading your comic for a good while now but before today (17th January) I had never read any of your readers' letters. WHAT A FUCKING LOAD OF CRAP THEY WRITE!!

Yours sincerely,

Arlene
Maxwell Park
Glasgow
Scotland

★★★★★★★★★★

My God, Dave,

0300 hours. Thursday. I've been watching the "Today" Show with this Brian Gumball dude. It just ended and have you ever seen 1990 written in Roman numerals? Have you?

MCMXC

Hmm . . .

MCMXC

No, Dave, I'm sorry but it just doesn't *work* I mean, 1888 now THERE's a year, but this? . . . And it doesn't end here, does it? In ten years we will have unleashed upon us a veritable epoch of wussy years. Romanwise, that is.

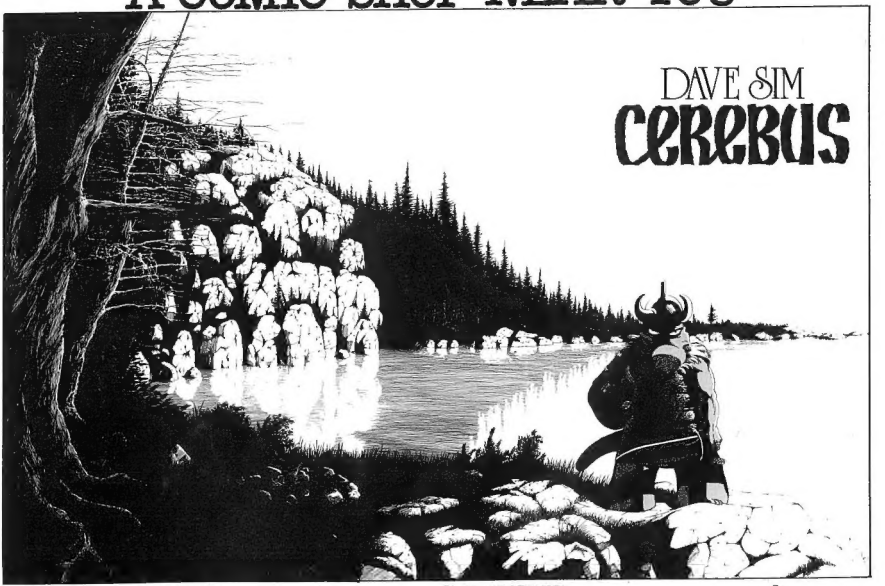
Now, Dave, I'm not sure what sort of pull you might have with whoever is responsible for these things, but a well placed word or two from you couldn't go astray and would be, frankly, *muchly* appreciated. Thank you,

Don't sleep in the subways.

Frogstar.

Brisbane
Queensland
Australia
The World

NOW AVAILABLE AT
A COMIC SHOP NEAR YOU



534 pages * reprinting CEREBUS 1-25 * soft-cover

'I pitch like my hair's on fire.'

Mitch Williams

OVER THE NEXT several weeks, Jaka felt her world had been rent asunder by the raven-haired interloper. Each day (it seemed) brought fresh directives from Astoria's newly-innaugurated Department of Women's Affairs (on pink, onion-skin stationery; each *communiqué* like a knife in the young girl's heart). The messages ranged from the bland to the insidious; advisories on home safety and fire prevention followed by dire warnings of spousal culpability in the event of law-breaking by one's husband (and sound procedural advice on assisting in swift arrest and vigorous prosecution).

A booklet arrived one morning listing every possible function of the female anatomy along with a chart composed of twenty-three 'Ideal Functions', flanked by a column designated with the appellation 'My Function'. Each woman, regardless of age, class or distinction was required to keep the booklet up-to-date and to surrender it to a duly-authorized Minister of the Department once a month. It was, then, returned to its owner after several days, with a small, red check-mark next to each entry and a pink, onion-skin sheet attached, upon which was printed a short criticism of those bodily functions which fell short of the Department's Ideal and helpful advice on the bringing-to-heel of one's rogue organs.

The first note addressed to Jaka, personally, advised that the Department had deemed 'excessive' several of her purchases during the weeks previous and had set, for the first time, a ceiling on her spending (which, needless to say, Jaka deemed 'inadequate'). A series of increasingly-terse messages were exchanged with the Department over a three-day period; the frequency of messenger comings-and-goings scandalising the general neighbourhood of Jaka's suite of rooms; until a final communication advised that messenger services were now to be deducted from each individual's clothing allowance. It arrived 'collect' with an invoice attached outlining a cost for the recent exchange of unpleasantries which was somewhat in excess of five skirts or eight blouses.

This provoked the abrupt promotion of Nurse from mere period piece to Jury Foreman at the Joint Trial of Astoria and the Department of Women's Affairs which was conducted spontaneously and at some length in the oval living room; invoice, *communiqué* and that month's booklet brandished each, in their turn, as clear proof of guilt under the strict letter of several of Jaka's Laws, each of which cried out for nothing less than the Supreme Penalty. Having exhausted both fact and rhetoric (and the ready supply of exhibits) in short order, Jaka came to a humiliating stop. Nurse, for her part, chose to fall back on a kind of period piece *privilège*, and declined to react in any way to the impassioned petition which had run its course before her.

In moments they had both lapsed into a furnitural silence. Nurse on the over-stuffed brown-and-beige arm-chair and Jaka on the cold, ebony sculpted seat where they regarded one another with cold satisfaction and smouldering resentment, respectively, for a good hour at *least*.